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Zoellick to Meet with Caribbean Trade Ministers
Caribbean Countries Celebrate 30th Anniversary of Economic Integration

WASHINGTON - United States Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick will meet with Caribbean Trade Ministers in Jamaica on July 2 to discuss the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), progress on global trade talks, trade capacity building, and closer trade ties between Caribbean nations and the United States.

“Caribbean countries are an important voice in the dialogue on hemispheric economic integration through the FTAA, and in global trade talks at the WTO. Through the Caribbean Basin Initiative, we have built closer economic links and helped to spur jobs and growth in both the United States and the Caribbean. The 30th anniversary of Caricom – the Caribbean Community and Common Market – is a fitting occasion to continue our work on economic integration through trade,” said Zoellick.

The meeting of Trade Ministers follows a similar dialogue held last September in Trinidad, and will be held on the eve of the 24th Regular Meeting of the Caricom Heads of Government. “I look forward to a dialogue with government officials, private sector representatives, and opinion leaders from the region on ways to promote economic development and increased prosperity in this region,” Zoellick said.

Ministers will discuss how capacity-building initiatives can help Caribbean nations benefit more fully from trade negotiations. “Assisting developing countries to participate fully and effectively in trade negotiations is an important U.S. objective,” Zoellick said. Over the past two years, U.S.

trade-related technical assistance has included more than \$21 million for Caribbean regional projects. Part of this assistance includes the Caribbean Trade and Competitiveness Program – a \$6.5 million U.S. project to promote private-sector growth and job creation in the hospitality, tourism, information and communication technology sectors.

Background

Negotiations among the 34 democracies of the Western Hemisphere on the FTAA continue, with Vice-Ministerial discussions to take place in El Salvador, July 7-11, and a Ministerial meeting this November in Miami, Florida. The United States and Brazil are co-chairing the final stage of FTAA negotiations. The negotiations are scheduled to conclude by January 1, 2005.

The United States and Caricom countries share \$9 billion in total (two-way) trade in goods. U.S. goods exports to Caricom were \$5 billion in 2002, a 53 percent increase since 1994. The United States imported \$4 billion of goods from Caricom in 2002.

Caricom member countries are: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.

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